

RETHINK REAL ESTATE FOR GOOD.

[PODCAST](#)[ARTICLES](#)[IN THE NEWS](#)[SPEAKING AND MEDIA](#)[REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT PORTAL](#)

No more broken promises.

July 20, 2022

0:00 / 29:44



Brinda Devine has over 25 years of experience in real estate, beginning at age 29 with Acquest Development, where she earned her real estate broker license and served as their Vice President of Asset Management. She then joined Wayne State University, where she established a Real Estate Office which facilitates the purchase and sale of land and buildings for the University, and she became the university's first Real Estate Officer.

Much of Brinda's real estate career has been influenced by her race and gender – she notes that early on in her real estate career, Brinda was often the only woman

and/or Black person in the office, in meetings, at events, and even in classes.

to the daily necessities most of us take for granted. During the last two years, Brinda says she's learned that the number one challenge of being a woman, particularly a Black woman developer, is getting access to capital. Her first project is the Kornr Store, and is a kind of development prototype that will provide what Brinda calls 'life essentials' – like coffee, healthy food and drink options, prepared food, home and personal goods, green space, internet access. She's raising funds for this project on [Small Change](#).

Brinda is an active member of Urban Land Institute, and a member of their Small Scale Local Product Development Council. She is a co-founding member and treasurer of Detroit's Women's Sustainable Development Initiative, and was also a member of the 2020 Cohort of the Equitable Development Initiative in Detroit, through Capital Impact Partners. Brinda is also an author of two books – Discover Your Value, Discover Your Purpose, and Authentication Process: Connecting the Dots of Being a Believer and Living a Life of Purpose.

▼ [Read the podcast transcript here](#)

Eve Picker: [00:00:05] Hi there. Thanks for joining me on Rethink Real Estate. For Good. I'm Eve Picker and I'm on a mission to make real estate work for everyone. I love real estate. Real estate makes places good or bad, rich or poor, beautiful or not. In this show, I'm interviewing the disruptors, those creative thinkers and doers that are shrugging off the status quo, in order to build better for everyone. If you haven't already, check out all of my podcasts at our website [RethinkRealEstateForGood.co](#), or you can find them at your favorite podcast station. You'll find lots worth listening to, I'm sure.

Eve: [00:00:56] Brinda Devine boasts of a 25-year career in real estate, working her way up to VP of Asset Management with Acquest Development. And then at Wayne State University, where she established a real estate office which facilitates the purchase and sale of land and buildings for the university. Much of Brinda's real estate career has been influenced by her race and gender. She's Black and she's a woman. She notes that early on she was often the only woman and or Black person in the office, in meetings, at events, and even in classes. In 2020, Brenda decided to switch seats at the table by launching her own real estate company, P8 Real Estate Solutions. She is focusing on developing neighborhood marketplaces within Detroit neighborhoods. But now, being Black and a woman have become a challenge to her like never before. Brinda Devine has a big story to tell, so listen in.

Eve: [00:02:09] If you'd like to join me in my quest to rethink real estate, there are two simple things you can do, share this podcast and go to [rethinkrealestateforgood.co](#), where you can subscribe to be the first to hear about my podcasts, blog posts and other goodies. Good morning, Brenda. Thanks so much for joining me today.

Eve: [00:02:50] You've had a pretty interesting career in real estate, 25 years of it. How did real estate become your career path?

Brinda: [00:02:44] Well, that's a little crazy. I actually didn't know anything about commercial real estate. I was about 25, 27 years old, left a banking career, answered a wild ad in a newspaper, the Sunday newspaper. Went to an interview, just going to find out about things and ended up getting the job out of 300 applicants.

Eve: [00:03:08] Wow.

Brinda: [00:03:09] Yeah. Surprised me, too. And I actually work for a wonderful developer who trained me from the ground up of not knowing anything and he was a colorblind individual. He did not see color, race, he just wanted to make sure that you were on the team and that we all were working towards the same goal. So, a beautiful gentleman.

Eve: [00:03:37] And so, over 25 years you worked with him and then you were the first real estate officer for Wayne State University as well, is that correct?

Brinda: [00:03:46] Yep. So, I stayed with the developer about 12 years and then I ended up applying for a position at Wayne State. They created an officer of real estate and joined there in 2005 and started that office for the university. And at that time, and I think that's still the case, the office was actually led by an African American woman of color. A person of color. The real estate office for the university. So that was, I don't think really too many people think about it that way, but that's, I thought it was significant, particularly with the impact with development in the city, particularly the the midtown area. So, it's been interesting.

Eve: [00:04:37] Very good. So, you've spent 25 years in the real estate industry and only recently you decided to take the plunge and create your own development company. What made you do that?

Brinda: [00:04:50] So, I've been blessed to be on the opposite side of the table to do business with developers. And I'm going to say that every one of them that I've dealt with, they were Caucasian males. I've not had a project with. No, I take it back one one Black developer I did a project with. So, I was thinking I needed to get from behind a desk and see what the reality was for developers on the opposite side of the table. I decided at the beginning of 2020 that I wanted to be a developer and I sought out a class through Capital Impacts EDI program, which is essentially a development class for minority developers. And it was eye opening. Being on the opposite side of the table of getting a lot of feedback

Eve: [00:06:00] And on top of that, you're a woman, which, you know, I was the only female developer in Pittsburgh for many years. So, I can only imagine you're a rare breed. So, how has that impacted your career? And you said this was eye opening and in what way was it eye opening?

Brinda: [00:06:21] So, I've been in commercial real estate. I usually work with men, white males. And so, I can say that I've been sort of trained for that type of environment. It doesn't bother me being the only person in the room. I have typically been the only woman in the room, the only Black in the room, and I adjusted to it because my personality is pretty direct and that's just a different pace when you're working with developers. So, that didn't really bother me because I fit my personality. And so, I understood that world of real estate, of coming in, talking to someone about your project and that there would be funds available. One, two, three, easy. I wanted to see what it was like on opposite side. And what I found out is that it is full of challenges, it's full of broken promises, it's full of. And because I'm analytical and because I don't come from that background, I have the ability to sort through information to go, okay, this is not really working. Why is this process not working? And be able to look into it a little deeper, because I've not been in that realm, and I could take a look at it from a first look. So, it was eye opening because I just saw processes that did not work and because the majority of the people who many of them have, I would say for the not-for-profit side, they're in this realm where they've committed themselves to do good and they are in these programs and they're trying to help people. But the problem is they are not developers. They have absolutely no idea. They're program managers. And it's really hard to make something work when you don't have any feedback on what that feels like or what that process is. And working, it's all sort of like it's just a process without actually having the experience, I put it that way.

Eve: [00:08:31] Right. So, it doesn't sound like it's impacted your career very much, but now that you've become a developer, what's that like?

Brinda: [00:08:41] It's been very frustrating because from my background, when I look at what, when I used to be an analyst and work for a developer and what was required to do a deal. But then when you're a woman or a person of color and you're reaching out to lenders for funding, there's always something that's missing. There's this big cloud of a big veil of information that is uncertain. People are interested in your project. They love the idea. They want to meet and talk about it, they want to help. And then the day after you get a call that, well, you know, I went to the team, and we talked about it and we don't really think your project fits. How does a marketplace within within a neighborhood not fit? There's always some level of criteria that there's something that astounds me, that they don't have the expertise in the beginning to analyze that. So, it's been very, very frustrating. And you have to have a

this resilience about you. So, it's been frustrating, but I also find it fascinating, and I find it challenging to be able to figure it out and get it done.

Eve: [00:10:25] Well good for you because it makes me want to cry. Really. I mean. I don't even know what to say. So, we are not at the point where an equal society. That's for sure. Right.

Brinda: [00:10:40] Yeah. I have the opportunity to be associated with an organization that listens to me. A not for profit, the Urban Land Institute that listens. And I've shared my perspectives and experiences and I've had a good opportunity just a couple of weeks ago to pitch my project at a committee meeting, and I took the opportunity to make it a teachable moment. I would say you should expand your circle. You should expand your friends, the food you eat, where you drive, places you go. Developers are often embedded in one area, and with this set of friends that I grew up with to school with and da da da. And so, their perspectives are limited and so their environment is limited and the information that they receive is limited.

Brinda: [00:11:30] So, when you give someone an opportunity to share your experience and expand their circle, I can pose it in a way for them to understand what it would be like if they were in the same scenario. So, they can have an emotional attachment to the problem that I'm talking about. I've gotten a lot of feedback from people of I really had not thought about it like that. I really had not considered that. You know what, I really need to do more about that. And that could be as simple as referring someone for a job, hiring someone, adding someone to your team, and you'll get a different perspective, a different understanding to expand your circle. So, that's the approach that I've been going at, just being vocal about it. I think sometimes we don't we don't really talk about stuff. We try to be politically, too much being politically correct and not just speaking out and being direct in our conversation.

Eve: [00:12:29] I love the way you talk about it, so I'm going to ask you, with all of this experience wrapped up, what sort of projects have you decided to focus on with your real estate company?

Brinda: [00:12:39] Okay, so personally, I am solution and purpose driven in the capital impact classes for the minority developer program I mentioned, I was exposed to a lot of information, research, market data, demographics and the consistent stream through Detroit and a lot of urban areas like Detroit is that there is a lack of healthy food options within the neighborhoods and there's a lack of personal and home goods. And I found that it's a good percentage of people shop at their convenience stores, the dollar stores, the gas stations. Even though Detroit is a motor city, there is a huge percentage of adults that don't have access to a car and during the pandemic, not necessarily access to public transportation as well. So, there is a need for a typical what you call a, what I grew up with, a corner

Brinda: [00:13:52] There's a lack of that in the neighborhood. There's a big gap for the small-scale developments. They're more inclined to 1 million and up. And so my niche is to focus on developing small scale marketplaces within emerging Detroit neighborhoods. I don't think that's an insurmountable task. You know, I've heard someone say, Well, that's a novelty. And I had to challenge him and say, it's not a novelty to have a store to go to. You actually go to a grocery store, and you eat on a regular basis. That shouldn't be something that you have to consider what you're going to do. And they hadn't thought about that, just like I had not thought about it before I took the class, and I expanded my circle. So, eating is not a novelty marketplace. A corner store is not a novelty in a neighborhood. So, just to get past that whole notion, but I try to make it funny but try to make it serious as well.

Eve: [00:14:57] So you've got a first project that you're working on, Kornr store. How did you find it and what neighborhood is it in?

Brinda: [00:15:04] So, it's in the Northwest Goldberg neighborhood of Detroit. It's not far from some long-standing partners here before, Northwestern High School, Motown Museum. I'm actually, I have been working on a model for this type of store for probably about for over two years. And I happened to mention to someone that I have been looking for a building, and they happened to mention this neighborhood, which I was somewhat familiar with. And I walked through the neighborhood, and what's interesting about the neighborhood, there's not that many parcels that are zoned for commercial. So, there were two buildings that were vacant. I look them both up, I found out who owned them both. One of them, I was a Facebook friend. And then I saw that we had a mutual friend and I asked for an introduction, and we got along very well and we had a mutual interest in the building of what it is. The building is actually a 100-year-old building. The original owner in 1904 went down to the city of Detroit and had it zoned for that parcel to be a grocery store. So that grocery store has fed that neighborhood for years.

Eve: [00:16:16] That's lovely.

Brinda: [00:16:17] And that's what it's been. And the person was initially purchased it to do the same thing, but it ended up being too small for their use. And so they had been waiting for someone who had the same type of mindset. So, we agreed on it and he sold it to me, and I actually felt as if he was passing a baton to me because it's a long legacy of feeding a neighborhood. And I just was grateful, if someone had told me a year ago that I would be doing this, I would have said that you were crazy. But purpose leads you to places that you would not think that you would land. And I'm just grateful that he trusts me enough to sell me the building.

Brinda: [00:17:13] The building is about 1000 square feet. There's commercial space on the first floor which where the corner store would be. And then above there's a two bedroom, two bath. And oftentimes I get asked, what, don't you think that's too small? I'm like, no, it's the perfect size because it fits within a neighborhood.

Eve: [00:17:33] Right. And how are you going to drag it into this century? Like what's going to be different in your store versus the way it used to be?

Brinda: [00:17:41] Well, that's a good question. So, what is going to be different? I have a small team. One of my team members is out of New York and she has a lot of good ideas. And I've done a lot of research on different marketplaces outside of Michigan. Actually, Michigan's kind of slow in terms of advancement and technology for convenience stores. So, one of the things in this will have to be scaled and I have to start at square one and scale up. But one of the things that's going to be different is we're going to have, of course, a coffee bar, but we're also going to have another type of bar. And I'm not going to say it because I don't want anybody to take my idea. We're going to have this other type of bar that has to do with food that I have found that people are so entrenched, and they love this type of food and to eat it all day and we'll have that type. But we'll also have some healthy food and drink options and some groceries and such and some artwork and some wine and some of the typical things you find in the convenience store. But the Kornr Store brand is also about being an amenity to the neighborhood, but also a neighbor.

Brinda: [00:18:58] So, during the weeks' time when there is a lull, let's say a Friday, nobody's really thinking about going to the corner store on a Friday, late afternoon or Thursday. We'll have some time to activate different activities that we've been planning for community engagement. The neighborhood has a huge percentage of senior residents and also young mothers and then older gentleman, and we'll plan events around the neighborhood, different activities that they can do. So, we can engage and use the space and also engage with local pop ups, maybe have some wine tasting events, maybe have some tutoring events. I have a multitude of friends that have finance backgrounds, real estate, architecture, legal. They can do different tutoring sessions or just have different topics that would interest the neighborhood. A birthday month for different seniors just to connect and to say that we're here. We're a neighbor. Yeah, I want you to shop. I want you to come by. But the very first thing I want is that when you walk through that door that you feel like you belong here. I've gone into other places, and you feel like you don't belong there. Like the neighbors, the residents who have held it down for so long won't feel welcome. I want the people in Northwest Goldberg, those neighbors to feel like they can walk in, and I'll have something for them and I'll have something for other people. I have something for

Brinda: [00:20:44] That's what I want to get out of this, that they feel good when they come in and then they stay for a while, then they leave. But that they feel good being in the Kornr Store that that brings back that emotional connection of the corner store that I grew up with. And I tell people all the time when I say corner store, this is emotional feeling of like, that's the place where you used to go pick up something at the last minute. That's the place where you actually went and found out what was going on in the neighborhood. That was the old school Internet of going in and finding out the news of what was going on. And I want that. I want people to feel like they can walk in and feel good about being there.

Eve: [00:21:23] You've talked about the challenge of financing a project like this and a project led by a Black woman. But you've added crowdfunding to the mix, which is an extra lift. Why investment crowdfunding. Who do you hope will invest?

Brinda: [00:21:40] Being the analytical person I am, I've placed applications for lenders, and we talked about that. And real estate, as you know, is about timing. And I needed another platform other than just the lender, I needed to have something that connected, that a person could read the story, they could understand, okay, this is a good idea. This is the right time. That's why I reached out for the crowdfunding. One of the things I'm finding about with lenders, I mean, some of them seem to be in a small spot, a place, and they can't really embrace the whole idea of Kornr Store because they have hundreds of loans going by. But when you have an opportunity to read the story, to read what I'm focused on, this isn't for me. I didn't pick this. It picked me. And in real estate, I truly believe that you should have a project that's bigger than you. And this project is definitely bigger than me. It is totally out of my comfort zone, but it is much needed, and I am in at 100% so.

Eve: [00:22:55] So it's really small but mighty, right?

Brinda: [00:22:58] It's small but mighty and it has. And I tell people all the time, you don't have to have huge projects to make an impact. You can have a small project and make an impact. Would a 200-unit apartment really impact the neighborhood? Or will you have an impact by putting in a smaller footprint that impacts the neighborhood and retains its personality? Smaller projects have big impacts as well.

Eve: [00:23:29] Talking about that, how have the neighbors welcomed you and this project?

Brinda: [00:23:34] They have welcomed me because I was respectful. I came in as a person. I came in as a human. I approached people as humans. I was respectful of the layers of history, the

that. I mean, demographics can be skewed as well. They can be biased. So, I came in as a human and approach my project as a human and the people that live there. That's why the Kornr Store is an amenity, but we want to be a neighbor. So, planning a neighbor in a place. And so, I have been welcomed very well. I've been introduced to the person before the person I purchased the building from. The building has a crack of grocery store. It's known in the neighborhood as that. And I met the owner who I believe he's 83. We met online and he actually provided me with a story of how he actually came into acquiring the store, which I found fascinating. It was more information, more history. And I could tell when I first saw the building how it was respected because there was no graffiti. It wasn't damaged. It's 100-year-old building and it's structurally sound. So, that told me a lot about how the neighborhood feels about that store.

Eve: [00:25:19] Yeah. One more question about it, and that fascinated me when I learned about this project. And you said that you will try to incorporate items to sell in the store that actually made by neighborhood residents. How has that come together?

Brinda: [00:25:34] So in Detroit, there are a lot of people who have small businesses, and we have a lot of incubators for small businesses that have been going on even before the pandemic. So, there are a lot of entrepreneurs here, a lot of artists, musicians and such, and I have it on my website that if anyone is interested in selling their items in the store, I have the opportunity to buy their products, even like authors. I have quite a few friends that are authors. I like to have a few books by local authors or have them pop up and do a pop up about their products or their books or their services. And I think that's important because it gives them an opportunity to have access to a space without having to go and pay for a space. And they're a start-up as well. I would definitely believe in spaces that have multiple uses.

Eve: [00:26:33] So once this one is put to bed, which I'm sure, yeah. What is the timeline, by the way? When are you hoping to get it finished?

Brinda: [00:26:41] I just had that phone call today. So, I could actually have the business open up by the end of this year. I'm ready to go with the permit and everything. The problem is the financing. I really need the financing to get this going. I've put in quite a significant amount of my own money, so it's not like I'm sitting here going, okay, I want everybody else to put their money in but me. No, I've done that. We're at the point where we are ready to start construction and as soon as we can start, that would be fantastic for me.

Brinda: [00:27:22] Oh, yeah, I've already. I'm already looking for the second one. I'm already looking for another location for the second one. So that's the idea behind the Kornr Store model is that it can fit in a residential lot. So, I am already looking at a second location, more than likely to lease that one. But this very first one, this one is the most important. It sets the tone for everything else. So yeah, the idea is to scale this model within Detroit and then elsewhere.

Eve: [00:27:57] So Brinda, I love the idea and I want to come visit as soon as it's finished. I can't wait to see it. And I wish you all the best of luck.

Brinda: [00:28:08] Thank you. I appreciate you. You know, I appreciate you. I do.

Eve: [00:28:12] Thank you so much for joining me.

Brinda: [00:28:14] No, thank you for inviting me. Thank you.

Eve: [00:28:23] Brinda Devine is a rare breed. She has spent most of her real estate career as the only Black and the only woman in the room. And she got used to it. Now she's facing a different challenge with the first real estate project that she's tackling on her own, access to capital.

Eve: [00:28:51] You can find out more about this episode or others you might have missed on the show notes page at our website RethinkRealEstateForGood.co. There's lots to listen to there. A special thanks to David Allardice for his excellent editing of this podcast and original music, and thanks to you for spending your time with me today. We'll talk again soon, but for now, this is Eve Picker signing off to go make some change.

Image courtesy of Brinda Devine

Filed Under: [All](#), [Community](#), [Crowdfunding](#), [Development](#), [Equity](#), [Investing](#), [Listen](#), [Visionary](#)

Tagged With: [Community](#), [Crowdfunding](#), [Development](#), [Equity](#), [Impact](#)

Make a difference.
Invest in
Small Change.

KEEP ME UPDATED!

NSSC Holdings, LLC is testing the waters under regulation crowdfunding. No money or other consideration is being solicited, and if sent in response, will not be accepted. No offer to buy the securities can be accepted and no part of the purchase price can be received until the offering statement is filed and only through the intermediary's platform. An indication of interest involves no obligation or commitment of any kind.

SIGN UP HERE

First Name

Last Name

E-mail

SUBSCRIBE



APPLY TO BE A PODCAST GUEST

EVENTS TO ATTEND

SEP September 15 - September 16

15 SuperCrowd 22: A virtual conference for social entrepreneurs.

[View Calendar](#)

MORE TO SEE



Why transit matters.

April 4, 2022



More housing, less parking (in Toronto).

February 28, 2022



The modern village.

January 10, 2022



CATEGORIES

[All](#) [Climate](#) [Community](#) [Crowdfunding](#)
[Development](#) [Equity](#) [FinTech](#) [Investing](#) [Learn](#)
[Listen](#) [Mobility](#) [Press](#) [PropTech](#) [Uncategorized](#)
[Visionary](#)

©rethinkrealestateforgood.co. The information contained on this website is for general information purposes only. Nothing on this website is intended as investment, legal, tax or accounting strategy or advice, or constitutes an offer to sell, solicit or buy securities.

Any projections discussed or made may not be accurate and do not guarantee a specific outcome. All projections or investments are subject to risk due to uncertainty and change, including the risk of loss, and past performance is not indicative of future results. You should make independent decisions and seek independent advice regarding investments or strategies mentioned on this website.

RECENT

No more broken promises.

Storyteller.

Are investors to blame?

Slaying Gentrification.

Before IMPACT was a thing.

SEARCH

Search the site ...

CATEGORIES

[Climate](#) [Community](#) [Crowdfunding](#) [Development](#) [Equity](#) [Fintech](#) [Investing](#)
[Mobility](#) [Proptech](#) [Visionary](#)

[HOME](#)

[ABOUT US](#)

[SAY HELLO](#)

Copyright © 2022 · Magazine Pro on Genesis Framework · WordPress · [Log in](#)